DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 138 HE 014 187

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TITLE	Re-entry Women: Relevant Statistics. Field Evaluation Draft.
INSTITUTION	Association of American Colleges, Washington, D.C. Project on the Status and Education of Women.
SPONS AGENCY	Women's Educational Equity Act Program (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Apr 81
GRANT	G007901070
NOTE	6p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Women's Re-entry Project, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R St., Washington, DC 20009.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Students; *College Students; Community Colleges; Declining Enrollment; Employed Women; Enrollment Trends; Females; Full Time Students; Higher Education; Majors (Students); *Minority Groups; *Nontraditional Students; Part Time Students; *Reentry Students; Trend Analysis; Two Year Colleges; Upper Division Colleges; *Womens Education

ABSTRACT

National trends and relevant data concerning re-entry women and other nontraditional student populations are examined. Current and projected enrollment are assessed, and other groups of women who are already employed or seeking work and who are likely candidates for educational re-entry are described. Among the findings are these: The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education predicts a 23 percent decline in the traditional college-bound group of 18 to 24 year olds by 1997. It maintains, however, that the impact on colleges will be partially offset by increases in participation by students 25 and older, by women and by members of minority groups. A trend toward nontraditional students (women, minorities, older students, etc.) has already appeared in the least traditional sectors of higher education (i.e., public two-year colleges rather than elite universities). At two-year schools older students comprise 40 percent of enrollment; enrollment in community colleges includes nearly 53 percent women; and women comprise slightly less than 50 percent of enrollment at four-year institutions. More than one-third of all college students are at least 25 years old, and the number of women 35 and older enrolled in college has doubled since 1972. Full-time enrollment has been growing much faster among women than among men, and part-time enrollment is also rising faster for women. Two percent of full-time undergraduate students in 1978 were Asian American/Pacific Islander, 10 percent were black, 4.9 percent were Hispanics, and 0.6 percent were American Indians. The percentage of these minorities that was women ranged from 46 percent to 57 percent. Fields of study and degrees obtained by the different minority groups and information on women who work are included. (SW)

FIELD EVALUATION DRAFT

Project on the Status
and Education of WOMEN

RE-ENTRY WOMEN: RELEVANT STATISTICS

ED205138

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RE-ENTRY WOMEN: RELEVANT STATISTICS*

INTRODUCTION

Returning or "re-entry" women students are appearing more frequently on campuses these days. Re-entry women, many of whom had earlier deferred college and career preparation to fulfill roles as wives and mothers, now outnumber college men, for their age groups, in both absolute numbers and in proportionate rates.

At the same time, many of these returning women students are in the paid work force. In fact, 67 percent of all women 35 and over who were enrolled in school in October 1978 were also in the labor force.[1] Whether because of economic necessity or personal choice, women are now entering or re-entering the labor force at unprecedented rates.

The correlation between a good education and a good job has not gone unnoticed by women in the work force. Because the average woman, whether single or married, will work more than 34 years of her life,[2] she does indeed have a large stake in obtaining a sound education in preparation for her chosen career. As more women aspire to move up the career ladder, more will be returning to college for additional education and training.

To prepare for these students, colleges and universities need to take a hard look at women's present stature in the work place. How are women faring now? What are institutions doing for women and what (if anything) should they be doing differently? Although each institution needs to look at its own present and potential re-entry population to answer these questions, some overall data may be helpful here.

Using information from a variety of sources, this paper highlights some of the national trends and relevant data concerning re-entry women and other nontraditional student populations.

The paper first looks at enrollment, both current and projected, and then describes other groups of women who are already employed or seeking work and who are likely candidates for educational re-entry. Having a clear picture of these potential student groups will become even more important as the enrollment of "traditional" students begins to decline.

COLLEGES LOOK TO WOMEN AND OLDER STUDENTS TO OFFSET DROP IN THE NUMBER OF TRADITIONAL AGE STUDENTS

- The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education predicts a 23 percent decline in the traditional college-bound group of 18-24 year olds by 1997. It maintains, however, that the impact on colleges will be partially offset by increases in participation by students 25 and older, by women and by members of minority groups.[3]

PROJECTED TRENDS: MORE "NONTRADITIONAL" STUDENTS

- The Carnegie Council also predicts that by the year 2000:
  - 52 percent of undergraduate students will be women;
  - 25 percent will be minorities of traditional age;
  - 41 percent will be two-year students;
  - 85 percent will be non-resident students; and
  - 50 percent will be aged 22 and older.[4]
- The trend toward "nontraditional" students (women, minorities, older students, etc.) has already appeared in the least traditional sectors of higher education (i.e., public two-year colleges rather than elite universities).[5]
- The National Center for Education Statistics forecasts that older students will account for public community college enrollment increasing from 3.9 million in 1978 to 4.2 million in 1988.[6]

WHAT KIND OF INSTITUTIONS ATTRACT OLDER STUDENTS

- At two-year schools older students comprise 40 percent of enrollment.[7]
- Trade and vocational schools attract 14 percent of all women students aged 35 and over.[8]
- Enrollment in community colleges includes nearly 53 percent women. Women comprise slightly less than 50 percent of enrollment at four-year institutions.[9]
- Although the percentage of students aged 26 to 35 is greater in community colleges, the proportion of students in this age group more than doubled at four-year institutions between 1973 and 1978.[10]
- At women's colleges, older women returning to school and the expansion of career-related programs generated a 2.5 percent increase in enrollments from 1977 to 1978, according to a survey of 53 colleges conducted by the Women's College Coalition in Washington, DC.[11]

ENROLLMENT OF OLDER WOMEN INCREASING

- More than one-third of all college students are at least 25 years old.[12]
- By 1978, the total enrollment of students 35 and older was 1.3 million, 65 percent (or 845,000) of which were women.[13]
- The number of women 35 and older enrolled in college has actually doubled since 1972.[14]
- Women now outnumber men in college for the first time since World War II. 5.9 million of the 11.4 million students attending college are women. In the traditional age bracket, enrollment of men and women are equal. It is the increase of women age 35 and older attending school which accounts for the difference.[15]

FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME ENROLLMENT UP FOR WOMEN

- Enrollment on a full-time basis has been growing much faster among women than among men, up 6 percent in the fall of 1980, after a gain of 3.6 percent in 1979.[16]
- Enrollment for part-time students is also rising faster for women. The number of part-time women students, most of whom are past the usual college age, has doubled each year for the past several years and is expected to have done so again in 1980.[17]
- While total college enrollment from 1972-1979 increased by 2.3 million students, about half that group were part-time students aged 25 and older.[18]
- 16 percent of full-time students are 25 or older.[19]
- More than half of the community college students attend part-time, while only a little more than one-fourth of the students in four-year institutions attend part-time.[20]

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*This paper was written by Jeanne Fisher-Thompson and Julie A. Kuhn. Staff from the Women's Re-entry Project and Project on the Status and Education of Women also contributed to the research and development of this paper. Ursula Barrett Paquette did some of the initial research.

FIELD EVALUATION DRAFT: This paper was developed under Grant #G0079-01070 from the Women's Educational Equity Act Program of the Department of Education. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the Department of Education, or the Association of American Colleges, and no official endorsement should be inferred. For further information, contact the Women's Re-entry Project, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202) 387-1300.

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5-YEAR ENROLLMENT TRENDS AMONG OLDER STUDENTS

Population aged 25 through 34

	1979			Change from 1974		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total	16,715,000	17,674,000	34,389,000	+ 18.3%	+ 17.2%	+ 17.7%
In college	1,356,000	1,319,000	2,675,000	− 1.1%	+ 58.7%	+ 21.5%
Full time	558,000	364,000	920,000	− 0.7%	+ 41.6%	+ 12.5%
Part time	798,000	955,000	1,755,000	− 1.4%	+ 66.4%	+ 26.8%

Population aged 35 and over

	1979			Change from 1974		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total	42,437,000	49,427,000	91,864,000	+ 6.5%	+ 6.6%	+ 6.6%
In college	487,000	914,000	1,402,000	+ 2.3%	+ 66.8%	+ 36.8%
Full time†	81,000	147,000	228,000	− 22.9%	+ 42.7%	+ 9.1%
Part time†	402,000	764,000	1,166,000	+ 9.2%	+ 72.5%	+ 43.8%

†Full time or part-time status was not indicated by 0.6 per cent of the students.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, as reprinted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 4, 1981, p. 3.

MINORITIES STILL LAG BEHIND IN COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND DEGREES

[Unfortunately, there is little available data on minority re-entry women; consequently most of the statistics in this section pertain to minority women in education generally.]

Asian Americans

- 2 percent of full-time undergraduate students in 1978 were Asian American/Pacific Islanders; 46 percent of these were women.[21]
- Although Asian American/Pacific Islander students comprise less than 1 percent of the college-age population, they account for over 1.5 percent each of the bachelor's, master's, doctoral and first-professional degrees.[22]
- In 1978, 2.2 percent of the graduate students enrolled full-time were Asian American/Pacific Islanders. Of these students, 38 percent were women.[23]
- 35 percent of Japanese American women, aged 25-29 completed college as of 1976, as did 44 percent of Chinese American women and 51 percent of Filipino American women in the same age group.[24]

Black Americans

- 10 percent of full-time undergraduates in 1978 were black; 57 percent of these students were black women.[25]
- Racial minorities make up a larger proportion of enrollment at community colleges than at four-year institutions. 12 percent of community college enrollment is black, compared with 10 percent at public four-year schools and 8 percent of private four-year schools.[26]
- While representing 12.4 percent of the college-age population (18-22), blacks account for 6.4 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 6.5 percent of the master's, 3.6 percent of the doctoral degrees and 4.3 percent of the first-professional degrees.[27]
- Of the graduate students enrolled full-time in 1978, 4.9 percent were black. Of black graduate students, 55 percent were women.[28]
- 11 percent of black women aged 25-29 completed college as of 1976.[29]

Hispanics

- 4.9 percent of full-time undergraduate students in 1978 were Hispanics; of this group, 52 percent were Hispanic women.[30]
- Persons of Hispanic origin, who comprise 4.9 percent of the college-age population (18-22), receive on average 2.8 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 2 percent of the master's degrees, 1.2 percent of the doctorates and 2.2 percent of the first-professional degrees.[31]
- 2.3 percent of graduate students enrolled full-time in 1978 were Hispanic. Hispanic women accounted for 46 percent of this group.[32]
- 5 percent of the female Mexican American population aged 25 to 29 completed college as of 1976, as did 4 percent of Puerto Rican women in the same age group.[33]

American Indians

- 0.6 percent of full-time undergraduate students in 1978 were American Indians; of this group 52 percent were women.[34]
- American Indians comprise 0.5 percent of the college-age population (18-22) and account for 0.4 percent of the bachelor's degrees and 0.3 percent each of the master's, doctorates and first-professional degrees.[35]
- American Indians accounted for 0.4 percent of the graduate students enrolled full-time in 1978. American Indian women accounted for 44 percent of these students.[36]
- 4 percent of the female American Indian/Alaskan Native population aged 25 to 29 completed college as of 1976.[37]

While education was the single most popular field for all racial/ethnic groups, a larger percentage of blacks and American Indians received their degrees in this field than did other racial/ethnic groups. Similarly, a larger percentage of black, Hispanic and American Indian graduates received their degrees in social sciences than did white or Asian/Pacific American graduates.[38]

OUTLOOK FOR WOMEN: GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK FORCE, MORE NEED FOR ADVANCED EDUCATION

Who are these women?

Women Who Work

- Throughout the 1970's women joined the labor force at an average rate of over 1 million annually.[39]
- 90 percent of all women will be employed outside the home at some time during their lives.[40]
- 52 percent of all women aged 16 and over are in the labor force.[41]
- 46 percent of all women over age 25 are in the labor force.[42]
- At present, the average woman whether single or married can expect to work for 34 years. (The average male can expect to work for 41 years.)[43]
- Women's participation in the work force is expected to increase greatly during the 1980's: among women 25-54, estimates average 66 percent to over 70 percent will be working outside the home.[44]
- Full-time women workers earn approximately 60 percent of what men earn. The wage gap is attributed, in part, to occupational segregation: women working in low-paying jobs.[45]
- Most women work for economic reasons: today, almost two-thirds of all working women are single, widowed, divorced or separated, or have husbands who earn under $10,000. Given the current rate of inflation, virtually all women work to support their families and maintain its standard of living.[46]

Women Who Head Households

- There were over 8 million female heads of families in 1978, an increase of 54 percent in the last decade. The proportion of all families now headed by women is 14 percent.[47]
- In 1978, most single-headed households were maintained by a woman (19.3 million vs. 9.4 million for men). 42 percent of these women maintained a family.[48]
- 63 percent of families headed by women included children under 18.[49]

Single Women

- 82 percent of single women aged 25 to 34 are in the work force, as are 77 percent of single women aged 35 to 44.[50]
- Of single older women aged 45-54, 74 percent work, and of those 55-64, 61 percent work.[51]
- Among divorced women (who constitute 9.2 percent of all women 16 and over), 74 percent were in the labor force in 1979.[52]

Married Women

- The fastest growing segments of the labor force during the 1970's were married women with husbands present and mothers with school-age children.[53]
- By 1990, three out of every four wives will be working outside the home.[54]
- 56 percent of all women in the labor force are married and living with their husbands.[55]
- In 1977, wives working full-time contributed 38 percent of family income. In these families the median income was $20,722 as compared to $15,796 when the husband was the sole breadwinner.[56]

Mothers

- Over 60 percent of mothers with school-age children are in the paid labor force.[57]
- By 1978, more than half (16.1 million) of all mothers with children under age 18 were in the labor force. About 5.4 million of these mothers had children under 6.[58]
- By 1979, over half of the nation's children had mothers who worked outside the home.[59]
- By 1990, two-thirds of all mothers with children under 6 years old will be in the work force and three-fourths of two-parent families will have both parents at work.[60]

Displaced Homemakers

- Across the U.S. there are an estimated 3 million displaced homemakers, women in their middle years (generally 35-64) who have been deprived of their traditional role by the loss of their spouse through separation, divorce, abandonment or death. Of these women, 75 percent are over 40 with an annual income of less than $5,000.[61]

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As the number of traditional age students declines, colleges and universities will require additional information on enrollment trends and projections to enable them to characterize the environment in which they will operate in the 1980's. Individual institutions may find it helpful to collect relevant data concerning their own current and potential re-entry and nontraditional student populations. Compiling such data can help administrators and planners to recognize the need for, develop and implement programs geared to, the needs of re-entry women as well as those of other nontraditional students. The availability of such services and programs will help institutions attract and retain increasing numbers of nontraditional students, and can also help to provide these students with equal access and opportunity in higher education.

NOTES

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[5]Barbara Heyns & Joyce Adair Bird, "Recent Trends in the Higher Education of Women," August 1979, paper prepared for the Research Conference on Educational Environments and the Undergraduate Woman, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, September 13-15, 1979, p. 17.

[6]*Higher Education Daily*, March 25, 1980, p. 1.

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[11]"Older Students, New Programs Raise Enrollment at Women's Colleges," *Women Today*, November 13, 1978, p. 135.

[12]*Manpower Comments*, Vol. 17, No. 8, October 1980, p. 26.

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[14]"Back to School at 35 and Over, October 1978," p. 53.

[15]*Equal Opportunity in Higher Education*, September 8, 1980, p.5; and "School Enrollment - Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: Oc-

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[17]"Sneak Preview: 1980 Census," *Working Woman*, September 1980, p. 74.

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[19]*Ibid.*, p. 1.

[20]"The Age and Related Demographic Characteristics of Students Attending Community Colleges and Four-Year Institutions," p. 3.

[21]Betty Vetter & Eleanor Babco, *Professional Women and Minorities*, Scientific Manpower Commission, Washington, DC, 1981, p. 101.

[22]*The Condition of Education*, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, 1979 edition, p. 213.

[23]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[24]*Social Indicators of Equality For Minorities and Women*, A Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, August 1978, p. 14.

[25]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[26]*Higher Education Daily*, September 17, 1980, p. 6.

[27]*The Condition of Education*, p. 213.

[28]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[29]*Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women*, p. 14.

[30]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[31]*The Condition of Education*, p. 213.

[32]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[33]*Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women*, p. 14.

[34]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[35]*The Condition of Education*, p. 226.

[36]Vetter & Babco, p. 101.

[37]*Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women*, p. 14.

[38]*The Condition of Education*, p. 214.

[39]"The Employment of Women: General Diagnosis of Developments and Issues," U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, April 1980, p. 2.

[40]*Florida Vocational Journal*, April 1980, p. 12.

[41]"Employment Perspective: Working Women," Summary 1980, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Report 643, p. 1.

[42]"A Statistical Portrait of Women in the United States: 1978," Current Population Reports Series P-23, No. 100, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, February 1980, pp. 6, 49.

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[44]"The Employment of Women: General Diagnosis of Developments and Issues," p.4.

[45]"Women in the Labor Force: Some New Data Series," Report #575, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1979, p. 3; and "Sneak Preview: 1980 Census," p. 74.

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[47]*Manpower Comments*, Vol. 17, No. 3, April 1980, pp. 17-18.

[48]"A Statistical Portrait of Women in the United States: 1978," p. 22.

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[58]"Childcare," U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet, Women's Bureau, August 1980.

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[61]Fleming & Milone, p. 17.

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APRIL 1981